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Stedman's Medical Dictionary 27th Editor

collagen (kol'la-jen)

The major protein (comprising over half of that in mammals) of the white fibers of connective tissue, cartilage, and bone, that is insoluble in water but can be altered to easily digestible, soluble gelatins by boiling in water, dilute acids, or alkalis. It is high in glycyl, l1-alanyl, l1-prolyl, and l1-4-hydroxyprolyl residues, but is low in sulfur and has no l1-tryptophanyl residues. It comprises a family of genetically distinct molecules all of which have a unique triple helix configuration of three polypeptide subunits known as α (α)-chains; at least 13 types of c. have been identified, each with a different polypeptide chain. SEE ALSO: collagen fiber. SYN: ossein, osseine, ostein, osteine. [G. *koila*, l glue, + -gen, l producing] **type I c.** the most abundant c., which forms large well-organized fibrils having high tensile strength. **type II c.** c. unique to cartilage, nucleus pulposus, notochord, and vitreous body; it forms as thin highly glycosylated fibrils. **type III c.** c. characteristic of reticular fibers. **type IV c.** a less distinctly fibrillar form of c. characteristic of basement membranes.

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